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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests a framework for analyzing needs of students with disabilities in dealing with transition services in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). It outlines procedures to follow to ensure adequate service delivery. The framework and procedures are intended to result in IEPs that not only will survive legal challenges but also will assist students in making successful transitions to life beyond school. The paper defines transition services in terms of legal requirements and notes the types of transition services, such as postsecondary education, vocational rehabilitation, continuing education, competitive or sheltered employment, independent living, and other adult services. The need for delineation of transition services in IEPs is emphasized, and possible areas of deficit that require IEP goals and objectives are noted. Current legal requirements for addressing transition services are described, and the question of how seriously to weight student preferences is discussed. A five-component transition process is outlined, as follows: identify the targeted post-school environment, identify the skills needed for the student to succeed in the targeted environment, identify services needed for the student to attain these skills, identify and involve appropriate service providers, and develop a transition timeline. (JDD)

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TRANSITION SERVICES: Developing And Implementing IEPs For Life After School

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Introduction

Under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a statement of needed transition services is now a required component of the IEP for any special education student age 16 or older, and for such students age 14 and younger when deemed appropriate.

The need for such a requirement is illustrated by statistics showing that over 50% of our work-age adults with disabilities are unemployed. In 1983, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that 50% to 75% of adults with disabilities in the United States were unemployed. In 1989, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that, while 5% of all adults were unemployed, 67% of adults with disabilities were unemployed.

Every year, over 300,000 special education students leave secondary school programs in this country. All too often, these students are ill-prepared to access the benefits of postsecondary education, employment, and/or full participation in community activities. Based on these and other statistics, and guided by recent studies and models for transition services, Congress determined that, in order for youth with disabilities to succeed in life beyond school, early and cooperative planning by schools, public and private agencies and families must occur.

This transition services requirement, which became law in October, 1990, has not yet been interpreted by the courts. Thus, school systems, parents and advocates involved in the

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development of IEPs must devise methods of implementation that will both satisfy the letter of the law and result in successful transitions from school to life beyond school. Existing studies and models-- including those relied upon by Congress in crafting the transition services requirement-- may, and should, be consulted in this endeavor.[1] Related legislation supporting transition also should be reviewed to further enhance understanding of what is needed and expected.[2]

Over the next few years, courts no doubt will have occasion to offer specific guidance on implementation of the transition services requirement of the IDEA. However, no amount of court interpretation will be determinative of every case. As with other IDEA requirements, the test for compliance is likely to concentrate on process more than on substance.

This paper suggests a framework within which to analyze individual student needs and a format for presentation of those needs and the services required to meet them. Specific procedures also must be adopted and followed to ensure adequate service delivery. The framework and procedures suggested here are intended to result in IEPs that not only will survive legal challenges but also will assist students in making successful transitions to

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[1]*See, e.g.*, Will, M., "OSERS Programming For The Transition Of Youth With Disabilities: Bridges From School To Working Life" (1984, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Washington, D.C.); Halpern, A., "Transition: A Look At The Foundations" (1985, *Exceptional Children*, Vol. 51, The Council For Exceptional Children, Reston, Virginia). In addition, The Council For Exceptional Children (CEC), Division on Career Development, expects to publish by Summer, 1992, a new manuscript entitled "Integrating Transition Planning Into The IEP Process." The authors wish to express appreciation to CEC for allowing access to a draft of this document, which has been a valuable reference in finalizing this paper.

[2]Specifically, The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (P.L. 101-392), the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) (P.L. 100-336), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §794, bolster and assist in defining programs and services needed in the area of transition. Under the Carl D. Perkins Act, certain assurances are mandated for special populations in vocational education programs, including assistance to students in meeting transition requirements set forth under the IDEA. The ADA guarantees persons with disabilities equal access to: employment, public accommodations, services and benefits, state and local government services, public transportation and telecommunications. The Rehabilitation Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by recipients of federal funds, currently is up for reauthorization, raising the possibility that existing support may be broadened even further.

life beyond school.

The Legal Requirements

The IDEA presents a definition of transition services that is quite broad and inclusive, and incorporates transition services as a component in the revised definition of IEP. 20 U.S.C. §§1401 (19) and (20).

Transition services are defined as:

> A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

The definition may be broken down as follows:

1. A coordinated set of activities,
2. designed within an outcome oriented process,
3. based on the student's individual needs,
4. taking into account the student's preferences and interests,
5. that promotes movement from school to post-school activities.

It should be noted that the lists of types of post-school activities and types of transition services included in the definition are not exhaustive, but merely examples. *See* 34 C.F.R. §300.18, Comment.

The new definition of IEP requires that, for all special education students age 16 or older, and-- when determined appropriate-- for special education students age 14 or younger, "a statement of the needed transition services" for the student shall be included. If interagency responsibilities and/or linkages are required for delivery of the identified

transition services, a statement of these responsibilities and/or linkages also must be included in the IEP.

The regulations specify that, when transition services are either mandated (age 16 and older) or are being considered for a student (younger than 16), the school system must ensure that the IEP meeting is attended by "a representative of the public agency responsible for providing or supervising the provision of transition services" *and* "if appropriate, a representative of each other participating agency providing the transition services included in the [IEP]." 34 C.F.R. §300.344 (c). Comment 2 to that section also provides that the school system is responsible for involving the student in the IEP, when appropriate, in order to "ensure that the transition services component of the [IEP] addresses the student's needs, preferences and interests."

In the event that an agency other than the education agency is identified as a service provider in the student's IEP, but fails to provide the service delineated, the education agency is required to reconvene the IEP team and identify alternative means of meeting the transition objectives. 20 U.S.C. §1401 (20)(F).[3]

Further, it should be noted that the 1990 amendments to the IDEA also include new categories of related services that are of significance in transition planning-- rehabilitation counseling and social work services. 20 U.S.C. §1401 (17). Also of significance is the separately-codified Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1990, incorporated in the IDEA at 20 U.S.C. §§1401 (25) and (26).[4]

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[3]It will be crucial for education agencies to enter into interagency agreements that include responsibilities which are as clearly-delineated and as binding as possible in order to ensure proper allocation of the burden of providing appropriate transition services. Agency recognition of the potential for long-term cost-savings by providing early support should promote cooperation in this area.

[4]An assistive technology device is defined as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." An assistive technology service is defined as "any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device." Assistive technology devices and services may be crucial in preparing students for transition to adult environments and in allowing access to less restrictive adult environments than might be otherwise be manageable.

What Are Transition Services?

A wide range of services is needed to provide the foundation for transition of secondary students with a variety of disabilities to postsecondary education, vocational rehabilitation, continuing education, competitive or sheltered employment, independent living and other adult services. In short, *transition services are those services needed to enable the student to succeed in targeted adult environments.*

Thus, in order to identify appropriate transition services, it is first necessary to identify appropriate adult environments. The range of possible environments, with indications of appropriate populations and services needed for successful transition, includes:

1. *Postsecondary Education*

a. *College or University*

While a few mildly impaired high school graduates-- generally those with learning disabilities-- are able to enter colleges or universities with no supportive services, most students with disabilities require modifications in the physical and/or academic environment. Possible services and accommodations include: physical accessibility, medical monitoring, speech and language therapy, tutoring and writing clinics.

In general, most colleges and universities publish information about their services, but it takes an experienced counselor to know which school's services really are readily available and which schools actually train their teaching staff to work effectively with the disabled.

During secondary school, the student must learn to become a self-advocate, familiar with his or her strengths and special needs and able to seek solutions to problems as they arise. High school, then, becomes a time when students come to know themselves and investigate the most suitable postsecondary settings. College-bound students should be enrolled both in career courses and social skills classes and, more importantly, must be given guided opportunities to practice learned skills.

Additionally, this group of students-- who will face a large volume of work on a daily basis-- must become facile with the computer. Ideally, the secondary student will master the computer with ease sufficient to make a laptop useful in the dorm, in class and in the library. The computer is also a useful tool for planning, organization and self-monitoring progress. Notetaking for the student with graphomotor, auditory processing and/or writing disabilities may be a problem surmountable only through the use of technology.

b. *Pre-College*

Many high school graduates, while not ready to enter college, are now entering non-credit-earning pre-colleges, designed to prepare the student for entrance into specific (usually affiliated) colleges or universities. This relatively new option grew rapidly, but recently has been affected by budget cuts. To date, these programs are more available to those who can afford relatively high tuitions, while programs at local, less-expensive schools are scarce.

Hearing-impaired students may enter Gallaudet's pre-college, while students with learning disabilities may attend Landmark or Boston University's pre-colleges. Length of stay prior to college admission varies as do the specific requirements. Preparation for this type of school is similar to that for the college or university.

Major goals must include: self-advocacy, career courses, social skills classes and the use of technology. During the later high school years, the program must provide opportunities for investigation of prospective programs. This may include extended visits, tours, speakers, and written documentation.

c. *Vocational Schools*

In general, most secondary schools for students with disabilities fall into two categories, one of which is highly academic and the other of which has a vocational emphasis, generally offering exposure to several vocations rather than in-depth preparation for a specific career. For many students, the curriculum is heavily weighted towards acquisition of skills for daily living.

Students considering vocational education must have ample opportunity to investigate their interests, talents and options. The high school career course should, and often does, include interest and aptitude testing as well as opportunities to take part in one or more internships or guided field experiences. Goals for these students often include: developing realistic career expectations, organizational skills and skills for independent living.

2. *Vocational Rehabilitation*

Perhaps the two most significant components of vocational rehabilitation are skills for daily living and vocational training. Populations served vary from those having congenital disabilities (such as developmental disability) and acquired disabilities (such as head injury). For most disabled young adults, there also must be a component that focuses upon the acquisition of cognitive skills.

3. *Independent Living*

While many high schools for the disabled emphasize skills of daily living, students most often graduate without the skills necessary to function on their own as independent members of the community. Programs for vocational rehabilitation concentrate on those skills without which the client could not function independently.

These high school graduates must learn to: take public transportation, balance their checkbooks, plan and follow budgets, get along with peers and authority figures, obtain driver's licenses, seek assistance from appropriate organizations and shop for food, clothing and other necessities.

Many secondary students in more academic programs are never exposed to these pragmatic activities as part of their curriculum. Others, in more vocational programs, have sufficient difficulty in generalizing to necessitate reintroduction of these skills as the settings change. The secondary student for whom independent living is a real possibility should have goals and objectives on the IEP that reflect the need to acquire these skills.

4. *Vocational Training*

Vocational rehabilitation may include: interest inventories, career assessments, job counseling, job placement and job coaching.

Many high schools for the disabled offer guidance in some of these areas, but most do not provide in-depth instruction in vocational guidance. In fact, many states, while they do have excellent vocational schools, preclude the attendance of students with disabilities by providing only instructional materials and curricula geared for regular education students. The special education high school graduate, therefore, may be faced with a "life after school" for which he or she is ill-prepared.

5. *Cognitive Rehabilitation*

The term cognitive rehabilitation refers to instruction in the basics related to cognition. Memory and language are two areas of emphasis.

While cognitive rehabilitation may benefit students having a wide range of disabilities, actual programs throughout the country concentrate on the cognitive rehabilitation of young adults with acquired disabilities due to accidents and stroke. For this population, it is imperative that the program be designed to facilitate the "relearning" of lost skills, which may be as basic as orienting oneself to the environment.

Within this population, students with prior disabilities are over-represented, being more at risk for acquired head trauma. This last point illustrates the need for secondary school curriculums for the disabled to include the goals of recognition and prevention of dangerous situations, with the acquisition of appropriate responses.

6. *Continuing Education*

Many high school graduates who are disabled hold down jobs quite successfully. Others do not. The notion of continuing education applies to both scenarios and is equally elusive to either.

The focus should be not only on improvement of skills but also on adapting learned skills for self-improvement, promotion or retraining for employment in a new field. High school students, may graduate fairly well-trained for a specific career, only to find that they do not like their job or cannot find a job in the field for which they were trained. Those secondary schools which expose their disabled students to a variety of potential career options increase their graduates' knowledge of job requirements and thus increase their graduates' chances for eventual job satisfaction.

Once on the job, continuing education is available through a variety of sources. State agencies provide some training as do private companies-- especially those with unions with some investment in the disabled. Continuing education may take the form of classes or on-the-job training. Job counseling and coaching may be included.

7. *Competitive Employment*

Many secondary schools recognize that they may represent the student's last opportunity for academic training or structured schooling. A large portion of graduates prepare to enter the job market directly from high school. It is necessary for these graduates to face the realities of life, which may include job hunting and interviewing, and possibly unemployment for a period of time. Many graduates are not properly prepared for this exploit. The over-representation of the disabled among the homeless and in shelters testifies to this fact. Student with emotional disabilities are especially vulnerable to becoming involved with the penal system.

This bleak picture is somewhat lightened by reports of schools that give students guided experiences in job seeking, interviewing and internships. An important component of this preparation is social skills training and organization. Graduates must learn to conduct themselves in a manner that is acceptable to their workmates, customers and employers. Secondary students contemplating competitive employment must learn: impulse control, timeliness, organization of materials and time, manners and personal grooming, as well as compensatory strategies for areas of special need.

8. *Sheltered Employment*

Students who are able to carry out guided employment, but are unable to work independently, may be productive employees within a variety of sheltered workplaces. Successful employees generally have two things in common: realistic expectations and sufficient social skills. Without either of these, chances for success in this setting are diminished. For most secondary students for whom this is a possibility, career training begins early, often in the middle school years.

While the decision to educate a student in a vocational track rather than an academic course is difficult enough, it is further complicated by the decision of when to begin vocational training. This decision must be based on input from a variety of sources. Consideration of student preferences and abilities, as well as parent, teacher and therapist involvement, all are critical to the decision-making process.

In some areas of the United States, sheltered employment is more readily available than in others. Often, it is available in conjunction with group living situations. The variety of settings differ as do their quality. Many employees in this type of setting come from a more restrictive, residential environment. These residential secondary school students should have IEPs with transition plans that reflect the skills necessary for the new setting. Employees of these sheltered programs may live in residential settings where social skills continue to be important. They may live in group homes or may live independently, commuting to work. Each setting produces a new set of requirements. The IEP must be tailored to provide the student with opportunities to acquire the skills necessary for the most appropriate environment.

As stated above, transition services are those services needed to assist a particular student, in light of his or her specific strengths and weaknesses, to succeed in targeted adult environments. The student's needs in this area, as in any other, are determined through

appropriate assessment.

The assessment process should begin early and should be both diagnostic and prescriptive in nature. Parents, educators, counselors, related service providers and adult agency representatives must collaborate to determine which assessment instruments are required, interpret assessment results and design instruction that will enable the student to transition successfully. In this way, a comprehensive profile of the student is developed, and planning is facilitated without unnecessary duplication of efforts or lost communications.

Assessments vary in degree of formality, ranging from standardized educational testing to observational narratives or checklists. In determining which assessments are needed, the first step is a thorough review of existing information. Only if this information is insufficient should other assessments be requested or administered.

As students approach secondary school, they may require more focused vocational evaluations, including standardized and criterion-referenced evaluations. The prescriptive nature of these is enhanced if the student is given direct feedback on his or her performance, possibly through reference to success within a task/skill analysis format. In this way, the student is able to determine what is necessary for each component of the job to be preformed successfully and to recognize goals and objectives that realistically can be designed to improve skills to accomplish the necessary tasks. Involvement of students in the assessment process increases their level of investment, the importance of which deserves great emphasis.

How Are Transition Services Delineated In The IEP?

In order for students with disabilities to succeed in targeted post-school environments, their secondary school programs must be guided by IEPs that: accurately describe strengths and weaknesses as determined through assessment, and adequately delineate needs, services and assessment criteria. In other words, the same criteria must be applied to the delineation of transition services as to any other IEP component.

This includes consideration of the least restrictive environment appropriate for delivery of these services. If anything, the importance of the least restrictive environment consideration is enhanced in the area of transition services, which often will include functional curricula that, by definition, are best delivered in natural, rather than segregated, settings.

For successful transition to occur, it is crucial that other agencies, such as the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, become involved in the development of the IEP as early as possible, but in any event at least through the last two years of secondary education. Only in this manner can the necessary continuum of medical, psychological and educational services be provided and duplication of assessments kept to a minimum.

The IEP should be comprehensive, defining areas of need in such a way that correct identification of the disability is inescapable and needed services are obvious. Because the IEP is, in effect, a "deficit document," all areas reflect a need for the individual to show progress. All areas, then, may be viewed as necessary for successful transition. The assumption that an area labeled "Transition" can stand alone suggests that the remainder of the IEP is irrelevant to success after school.

In fact, the transition services requirement may well result in the inclusion in the IEP of areas previously excluded because deemed unnecessary to the student's satisfactory functioning while *in* the school environment. One example of such an area is the development of self-advocacy skills. Now, inclusion also is mandated if an area needs to be addressed in order to prepare the student for success in life *beyond* school.

Goals and objectives must be developed for each area of deficit and criteria must be outcome-oriented. Areas of deficit requiring goals and objectives must be specific to the individual rather than generic. Possible areas of deficit to be addressed include:

1. *Medical*

The range of goals and objectives is as diverse as are the individuals this area describes. They may refer to an individual's developing abilities to: use special equipment,

self-monitor medical needs, care for one's own daily physical/medical needs, seek and request information and assistance and adapt to a variety of environments. Services range from medical monitoring to more full-time care of specific practitioners.

2. *Speech/Language*

Goals and objectives in this area should result from specific evaluations and should be subject to criteria that include reassessment. Needs may be found in the areas of phonology (involving articulation), semantics (meaning), syntax (grammar), auditory processing, voice, oral motor, fluency, and, perhaps most importantly, pragmatics (function).

For many disabled students, this last area-- which refers to the social use of language-- is crucial. Deprivation of services in this area can result in otherwise language-competent individuals failing in social and work experiences. Gestures, body language, distance from speaker, turn-taking skills in conversation, relevance of topic and ability to read the listener's level of understanding and interest are subtle, yet critical, factors.

Services may include: speech/language therapy, social skills and pragmatic groups, special equipment for voice modulation and dysfluency and technology/methodology for augmentative communication.

3. *Sensory Motor*

Evaluations in the areas of gross and fine motor coordination, tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive feedback include: ambulation, range of movement, physical education and recreation, movement, normalization of reaction to tactile input and body awareness and stability. Services in this area may include: occupational therapy, physical therapy and adaptive physical education.

4. *Visual Motor*

Visual motor evaluations usually are administered by an occupational therapist and may identify needs in the areas of compensatory visual skills, use of special technology/methodology, visual discrimination/perception, visual attention/memory and visual motor integration. For high school students, objectives in the visual motor area should be as specific as possible. For example, a student with poor graphomotor (handwriting) skills, may have an objective relating to the development of keyboarding ability. Services may include occupational therapy and vision training.

5. *Academic*

Yearly educational testing and staff observations contribute input to the development of goals and objectives in this area. Deficits in the areas of mathematics, reading and written language range from needs that are quite basic to the more sophisticated. For example, in math, one student may need to concentrate on more functional math skills, such as telling time or reading the calendar, while another may be tackling algebraic concepts. Services always should include the special education teacher and also may include tutors or reading specialists.

6. *Cognition*

Components such as the ability to use critical thinking skills and abstract concepts, and skills in the areas of organization, attention and memory are significant to success after school. Whether a graduate is entering postsecondary school or entering the world of work, such skills as planning time and attention to task are invaluable. Special educators generally are listed as service providers and criteria generally are performance-based.

7. *Daily Living Skills*

The areas of self-help skills, transportation, use of leisure time, decision-making, home maintenance, consumer skills, use of public services and agencies, child care, budgeting, banking and taxes, health and safety and abstention from use of dangerous substances all are important to the individual who will be enjoying some measure of independent living. The special educator and hands-on experience are the most critical factors for becoming competent in these areas.

8. *Social/Emotional*

All too frequently, the student with disabilities leaves the school setting with skills adequate to function in the chosen post-school setting, but fails due to the inability to get along with others.

The individual may be oppositional, impulsive, depressed, rigid or simply unable to "read" and interpret the nuances of social interaction. These deficits interfere with making and keeping friends, getting along with peers and keeping a job.

Goals and objectives in this area are difficult to measure, but should be performance-based with baseline and progress data. The services of a school psychologist, psychiatrist, counselor, social worker and special educator are typical, and options for services including individual, group and/or family counseling can be specified.

9. *Pre-Vocational/Vocational*

Career awareness, the development of realistic expectations, self-advocacy, job interest and aptitude exploration, job-seeking skills (including interviews, applications and resumes), and work habits, attitudes and behaviors all are important components of career courses and vocational programs. Career/guidance counselors, special educators and vocational education specialists work with students in these areas. Work experiences, postsecondary exploration and the development of relationships with outside agencies are indispensable for successful transition.

While no current regulations mandate or define the responsibilities of agencies other than educational agencies in the area of transition, the development of successful relationships between these agencies and the school during the high school years must not be underestimated.

Resources for assistance after graduation are scarce and often are difficult to locate. The student with disabilities often does not have the skills to make these connections, so that the involvement of these agencies in the development of the IEP becomes even more necessary.

While it is tempting to view the last category as synonymous with transition, it must be recognized that the IEP is important in its entirety. The young adult with disabilities may accomplish all or most of the goals and objectives in this section of the IEP, but fail to transition successfully due to an inability to manage time, count money, get along with others, carry on a comfortable and informative conversation and/or avoid abuse of drugs or alcohol.

Fostering the growth and development of the total person, through development and implementation of IEPs which truly reflect "a coordinated set of activities" designed to achieve that end is consonant with legal requirements and constitutes responsible education. Any attempt to meet the letter of the law simply by answering "yes" in a box labeled "transition services" would be both insufficient and irresponsible.

In designing the format for presentation of transition services in the IEP, it is suggested that the IEP cover sheet include space for a list of the needed transition services. Some of the items on this list may otherwise be recognized as related services under the IDEA-- such as psychological counseling-- and some may not. The services listed as "transition services" on the front of the IEP should be linked to appropriate goals and objectives within the body of the IEP by identification therein as services required to meet specific goals and objectives. It is further suggested that a brief statement, summarizing the transition services, be included-- either on the cover sheet, in proximity to the list of services, or as a separate section of the IEP if more space is desired.[5]

The IEP also must include the appropriate assessment information relative to transition services. As discussed above, students' needs in the area of transition are determined through a wide range of assessment measures, depending upon areas of deficit.

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[5]It is possible that such a statement alone could satisfy legal requirements; however, it is more advisable that the statement required by law be expanded upon as described herein, both for the purpose of ensuring findings of compliance in the event of legal challenges and in order to achieve successful transition through proper delineation of goals and objectives, services and service providers.

Some criteria are formal and standardized, while others are informal and criterion-based.

Psychological and educational evaluations are mandated by law, including areas of related services such as speech/language therapy and counseling. Assessment of social/emotional functioning generally is accomplished through written reports of teachers and other service providers. Vocational assessments and measures of interest and aptitude, while usually non-standardized, generally are acceptable and of quality when the criteria for measurement are clear. These measurements should be included in the IEP. It is only through these criterion-referenced assessments that progress can be measured, aptitudes assessed and proper weight given to the student's expressed preferences.

At What Age Should Transition Services Be Included In The IEP?

Current legal requirements address transition services for students with disabilities age 16 and older and, to the extent appropriate, for students with disabilities age 14 or younger. The question of how soon to begin to include transition services is a difficult one.

If the total IEP is considered as a vehicle for transition, then any IEP-- even for the youngest student-- must be considered as preliminary to a full "transition document." The point at which an IEP becomes a full transition document is when goals and objectives aimed at specific adult environments (such as prevocational, vocational or college preparatory goals and objectives) are included, and other local and state agencies are involved in the process as necessary.

Deciding when to begin to include these options is difficult as, to an extent, it falls within a philosophical arena. In part, this decision is influenced by the type and extent of the disability itself. Students who are more severely impacted and those whose disabilities are more apparent generally begin to receive vocational training sooner. For those who function on the bottom of the continuum, the decision often is made by the parents and educators with little or no input from the individual. For the remaining students, their input and their preferences are considered and are important as pertains to the timing of inclusion

of transition services as well as to the nature of those services. Many schools agree philosophically that high school is the last chance large numbers of students with disabilities will have to be exposed to academics; thus, their curriculum remains highly academic with little or no vocational awareness or training. The students in these schools usually are higher functioning individuals and, therefore, formal transition services may not begin for these students prior to age 16; however, career awareness should begin very early.

Regular preschools introduce community helpers, while the elementary schools have guest speakers-- often parents-- who discuss various occupations with the children. Certainly, no less should be done for the student with special needs; indeed, it is probable that something more structured and more intensive is required to familiarize these students with options after graduation.

For the student who is enrolled in a more vocational program, the decision as to when to begin transition services must be dependent upon the individual, staff and parent input and available community resources. Because the drop-out rate among the disabled is so high, the idea of including transition services before the age of 14 becomes more appealing.

While nothing can be lost by appropriate inclusion of these services early on, the two considerations must be: (1) avoidance of "tracking" too early, and (2) recognition of the need to include vocational training and interagency coordination before it is too late to be effective. Ultimately, the decision must be based upon individual need, balancing the above considerations and taking into account student preferences as much as possible.

How Are Student Preferences Ascertained And Included In The IEP?

The question of how seriously to weight student preferences is becoming more important as transition is recognized as an essential part of the IEP. The answer is neither clearcut nor easy to derive.

For some students with relatively realistic expectations, the inclusion of preferences is desirable and does not promote controversy. For most students with disability, expectations are unrealistic and, in some cases, preferences are not yet established. Notwithstanding the unrealistic nature of many students' expectations, goals and objectives on the IEP must reflect student preferences. Without this, there is little hope for success.

When student expectations and preferences are reality-based, goals and objectives can be oriented towards the achievement of these goals, whether they be entering postsecondary school or exploring specific vocations.[6] However, when expectations and preferences are unrealistic, IEP goals and objectives must have a dual focus. Students must be exposed to realistic options as well as to those for which their expectations are perhaps too high. It is only in this way that they can learn to make self-assessments, test reality and to begin to form self-concepts that are in line with their abilities. Exposure to a wide variety of options helps to assure greater success in the choices that the student eventually will make. Hands-on experiences through internships, apprenticeships and field experiences are invaluable.

The Transition Process

With this foundation, a process can be derived that not only satisfies the legal requirements but accomplishes the purpose that underlies them-- the successful transitioning of students from school to post-school activities. The process may be broken down into five components:

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[6]This becomes even more difficult when the student with a disability also is an undocumented alien. Although such students clearly have a right to the provision of a free appropriate education, they may not have the right to secure employment during or after secondary school. In order to be work-eligible, students must have temporary residency status, which means they have been deemed to have the right to be present in the United States and to work, but are waiting for authorization to apply for a social security card. If a student lacks this status, he or she is ineligible to participate in any program involving employment for wages, although they may be placed in a variety of other settings, including community-based training programs, exploratory work-experience programs, and career and vocational training programs. Although the transition services for such a student cannot include employment for wages, targeted adult environments probably should not be restricted unduly by the student's current status; rather, the same analysis should be applied to this student, with some additional contingency planning and perhaps even greater emphasis on self-advocacy skills that may be needed to seek an eventual change in status.

1. Identify the targeted post-school environment or environments for the student.

2. Identify the skills needed for the student to succeed in the targeted environment or environments.

3. Identify the services needed in order for the student to attain and apply these skills.

4. Identify and involve the appropriate service providers.

5. Develop a transition timeline.

Each component of the transition process involves a number of steps, at least some of which are identified below. It must be noted, however, that each component represents an ongoing process in itself, and that these processes often will be concurrent or overlapping, as illustrated by the graphic attached as Appendix A. In other words, the components do not necessarily represent linear steps that will be followed to a conclusion. Rather, each component must be recognized as necessary to the total process, and must be brought into play as appropriate in light of the individual student's profile and circumstances.

1. *Identify Targeted Environment:*

There may be more than one targeted environment or a series of targeted environments for a particular student. As the student evolves and the transition team gathers more comprehensive information concerning both the student's needs and available options in the community, adjustments may be made. The idea is to target specifically enough to allow for meaningful delineation of services but not so specifically that future options are limited.

The steps involved in this component include at least the following: assessment, obtaining input from student and family, obtaining input from teachers and other service providers, and obtaining input from outside agencies, private businesses and/or postsecondary institutions.

2. *Identify Skills Needed For Success:*

As discussed above, a wide range of skills contribute to successful transition. Job skills alone will not be sufficient where interpersonal skills are lacking. Self-advocacy skills also are extremely important, and should be emphasized.[7]

The steps involved in this component include at least the following: assessment (or further assessment), obtaining input from teachers and other service providers and obtaining input from outside agencies, private businesses and/or postsecondary institutions.

3. *Identify Necessary Services:*

Involvement of other agencies, private businesses and/or postsecondary institutions will become particularly critical at this stage. Once services are identified, steps must be taken to delineate responsibilities and provide appropriate follow-through, monitoring and contingency planning.

The steps involved in this component include at least the following: obtaining input from student and parents, teachers and other service providers, outside agencies, private businesses and/or postsecondary institutions; development of specific goals and objectives for the period covered by the IEP and identification of services needed to attain those goals and objectives, as well as identification of services needed to support the student after leaving school and implementation of these services before the student leaves the school environment. Examples might be psychological counseling, self-advocacy training and/or job coaching.

4. *Identify Service Providers:*

Involvement of outside agencies again is crucial in the context of this component. As stated above, clear and binding agreements covering the provision of needed services are

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[7]At a minimum, students should be exposed to their rights under applicable federal laws such as The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans With Disabilities Act. Under these laws, the person with a disability has the burden of making his or her needs known in order to benefit from the protection offered from discrimination on the basis of disability.

indispensable. In selecting service providers, consideration should be given to the settings in which such services must occur in order to provide effective support for transition; *e.g.*, a natural setting as opposed to a segregated one.

The steps involved in this component include at least the following: development of clear and binding interagency agreements that fairly and reasonably allocate responsibilities for service provision, obtaining input from student and parents, teachers and other service providers, other agencies, private businesses and/or post-secondary institutions, and involving outside agencies directly in IEP development, with clear delineation of responsibilities set forth in the resulting IEP.

5. *Develop A Transition Timeline:*

This component reflects the need for long-range planning acknowledged by Congress in adding the transition requirement to the IDEA. Although IEPs specify goals, objectives and services for the period of one year, transition planning encompasses a longer period of time. As with other IEP components, transition services are not written in stone, but may be adjusted from year to year, or more often if necessary. Nevertheless, by definition, transition services involve longer-range goals and expectations. For the first time, the IEP must not only allow for success during school years but in the world beyond school.[8] A transition timeline will be of assistance in planning and coordinating the activities needed to achieve targeted adult outcomes.

The steps involved in this component include at least the following: obtaining ongoing input from the student and parents, teachers and other service providers, outside agencies, private businesses and/or postsecondary institutions focusing on long-range goals.

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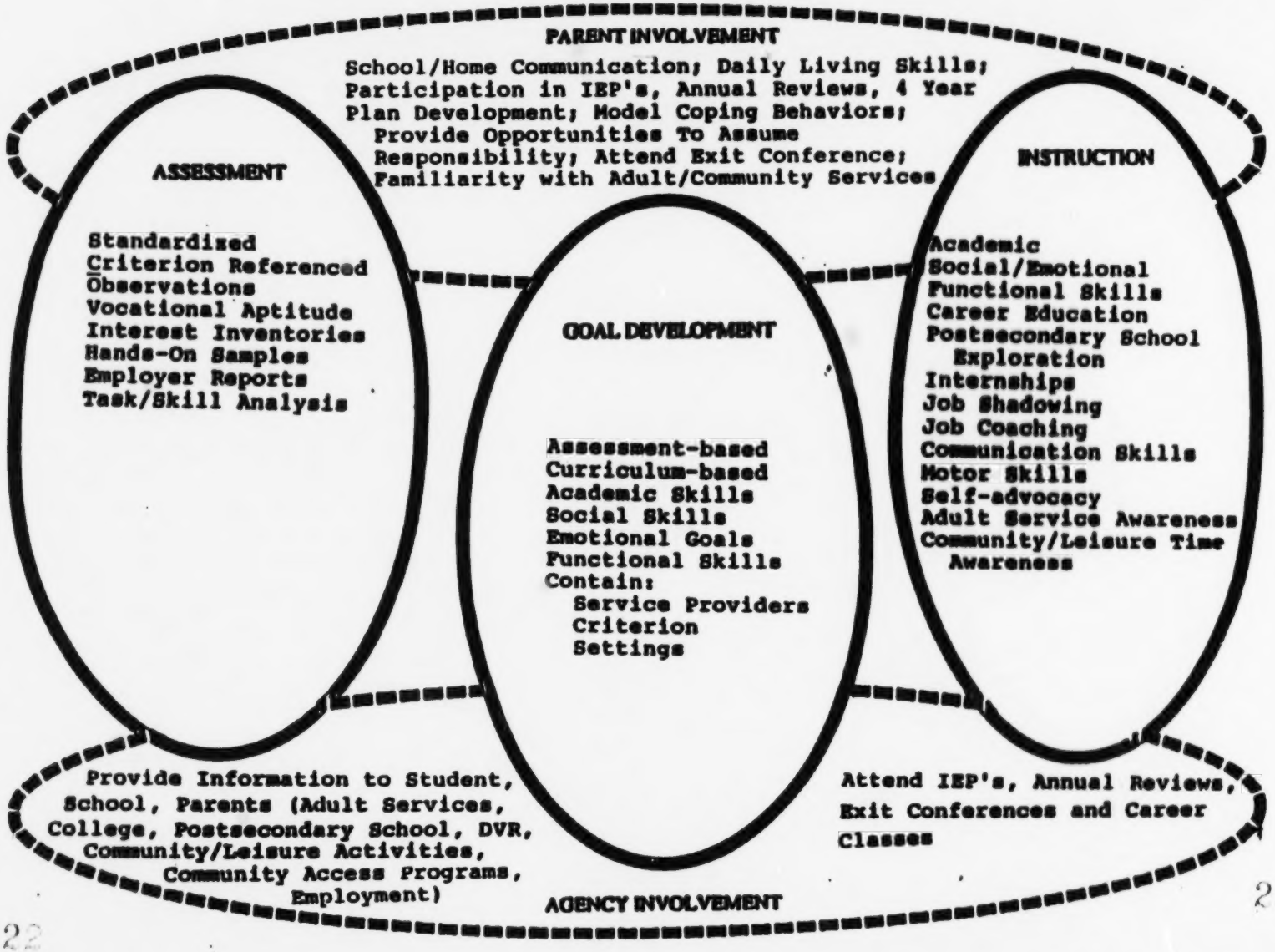
[8]This outcome-oriented model raises the question of whether increased claims for compensatory education may result if services are not properly delineated or delivered and the student is not equipped to succeed in the targeted adult environment at the time he or she normally would leave the school setting.

Conclusion

The transition services requirement of the IDEA, in concert with related federal legislation affecting individuals with disabilities, constitutes a major step forward in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the mainstream of American life.

As discussed above, the addition of "a statement of needed transition services" to the IEP is hardly a trifling matter. Rather, it requires comprehensive assessment, broad collaboration, detailed delineation of needs, services and service providers, and careful monitoring and adjustment. Development of and adherence to sound procedures, as well as proper documentation of services, should remove any significant risk of noncompliance and, most important, is certain to enhance success in life beyond school for students with disabilities.

GENERIC TRANSITION DELIVERY MODEL



APPENDIX A